

SELF-AWARENESS OF THE PROTAGONIST AS REFLECTED IN ANDREW GEORGE'S *THE EPIC OF GILGAMESH*: A PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH

FATATUN MUBAROKAH

fata.xiu@gmail.com

English Education Department, Ahmad Dahlan University

ABSTRACT

This research entitled "Self-awareness of The Protagonist as Reflected in Andrew George's "The Epic of Gilgamesh": A Psychological Approach". The objectives of the research are: to describe the story of the poem, to describe the characterization of the protagonist, to explain self-awareness of the protagonist observed psychologically, and to identify the moral values. The subject of the research is "The Epic of Gilgamesh" translated by Andrew George. The poem is used as the primary source, while books, journals, and articles are taken as secondary source. The data were collected by visiting libraries, reading, taking notes, and categorizing data. Then, the researcher applied a psychological approach to analyze the data. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively in the form of statements and sentences. After conducting the research, the researcher comes to the conclusion that first, the story focuses about the protagonist who seeks immortality after the death of his best friends. He fails to reach immortality, in exchange, he gains knowledge and wisdom. Second, the protagonist is categorized as a round character because he experiences the change in his characterization. Third, the self-awareness of the protagonist went through five stages. The first stage is feeling clueless. The second stage is to understand yourself. The third stage is to understand social patterns, the fourth stage is afraid of turn into madness, and the last stage is to accept human nature. Fourth, moral values taken from the poem is related to self-awareness, the aspect of leadership, and decision making.

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1. INTRODUCTION

"The Epic of Gilgamesh" is an old narrative poem from Mesopotamian era. It is also under the head and part of Sumerian Literature. The story focuses on King Gilgamesh, a demigod whose parents are King Lugalbanda and minor goddess Ninsun. Gilgamesh is a king who able to reach a great self-awareness.

In this life, everyone behaves according to their beliefs, to what kind of people they are. They do something because they believe that they are capable of it, and they try to avoid other tasks because they think that they are incompetent. But sometimes, some people deny their capability, goals, values, feelings, and weaknesses. This can make

people go to the state of conscious denial, they are aware of their weaknesses but they deny it because they want to be perfect, or it is usually called suppression.

Self-awareness is related to the psychological state which becomes the major subject in psychology. Goleman (2018: 3), in HBR Emotional Intelligence Series, states that self-awareness stands as the fundamental component of emotional intelligence and extends to a person's understanding of their values and goals. Later, Matsumoto (2009: 464) describes self-awareness as someone's perception of bodily sensations, actions, and mental process. Self-awareness also has meaning than one exists as an individual which different from others and has their feelings, thoughts, and sensations. Based on Eurich in Buckingham and Rober (2018: 18-19), concludes that self-awareness is how people perceive their merits, desires, goals, limitation, potential, and impact on others and how other what people think about us.

There are five stages to reach self-awareness. The first stage is feeling clueless. The aspect of this stage has a close connection with the educational system and the development of the frontal cortex. The second stage is to understand yourself. People began to understand oneself that will result in understanding others. The third stage is to understand social patterns. The fourth stage is afraid of turn into madness, they aware that the reality is different from their understanding. The last stage is to accept human nature. People do not have the capabilities to change the whole world, but they can change his or her world.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is qualitative method because this thesis does not require statistic calculation. The data contain quotation, description, statement, and explanation. This data analysis is used to provide distinct information and description. To analyze the data that are collected, the data are analyzed through an in-depth text analysis method. Afterward, it is studied and interpreted under psychological approach. Library research is done to support the data. Library research is the process of accumulate, classify, describe, assess, and explain to complete and to support the data and information (Affandi, 2018; 41)

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter contains the analysis and the explanation of the problems that become the objective of the study.

3.1. The Story of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*

The narrative poem Epic of Gilgamesh tells about the story of King Gilgamesh. He is a demigod who arrogant and tyrant. His behavior is the reason why the gods create Enkidu as punishment for his behavior. However, they become good friends rather than an enemy. They are good friends who encounter a lot of journeys, but their arrogance and carelessness cause one of them to receive the death punishment. Enkidu died and Gilgamesh become a depressed man who afraid of death. He travels a long journey to know the way of immortality. In the end, after he met Uta-napisthi the wise man, he realized that it is impossible to gain immortality because death is human nature. He becomes a wise king who seen many things.

3.2. The Characterization of the Protagonist

In the beginning of the poem, Gilgamesh is portrayed as an arrogant king. He is strong like a wild bull and he has no parallel in weapons collection. No one can defeat him in battles and he forces them to kneel before him. It is causing him to harass others because he thinks that they are such weaklings. He is a tyrant who harasses and punishes his subjects, especially young men, without reasons and mercy. However, he is allowed to commit something wrong because he is the highest authority and no one has power to defend themselves. He is enslaving children to work and he does not allow them to rest and to live peacefully with their family, it shows in words "*lets no son go free to his father*".

His tyranny is getting worst and he also becomes a rapist, it describes how Gilgamesh "*lets no daughter go free to her mother*". It means that he likes to ravish women. Not care if the woman is a daughter or a wife of his warriors, even the noblewomen. His depraved actions make all women complain their suffering to the goddesses. He is also the imprudent man, it shows when the elders (senior advisers) give advice for Gilgamesh to not act recklessly when it comes to the idea of killing Humbaba because he is still young and emotional when making a decision.

Gilgamesh is a dignified man and graced with charm. He is powerful and handsome, as expected from demigod king like himself. His dignified side is shown in the

aspect of his strength. Because he is strong and mighty, it is natural for him to deserve respect from others. Despite his arrogance, Gilgamesh is quite a rational man. He uses reason to decline Ishtar's proposal. Even if the one who proposes to him is a high ranking goddess and also the personification of beauty itself, he declines because he knows what will happen to him if he accepts her proposal based on her past lovers who always end in tragic fate.

After the death of Enkidu and his fear of death grows bigger, he becomes easy to intimidate and easily to be afraid. He, the one who is able to kill giant divine monsters Humbaba and Bull of Heaven, grew afraid when he just saw some lions and scorpion-men. Gilgamesh also becomes a melancholy person. His heart is full of sorrow and sadness because of the death of his best friend. The friend he loves the most and his equal. His mood is gloomy and he feels depressed. He even does not take care of his appearance. The sign of someone who is depressed about something is they do not take care of anything and only focus on their problem.

At the end of the story after his journeys reach the end, Gilgamesh becomes a wise man and king. He is wise in all aspects and he is entitled as a man who "*saw the Deep*". It means a man who has knowledge and discovers many mysteries. In the process in his journey to gain immortality, Gilgamesh gains a lot of knowledge and experience many things. He discovers many secret places and meets new people and learns the sum of wisdom from Uta-napishti. He learns about the Deluge that happened in the past and how Uta-napishti became immortal being. Gilgamesh is "*brought back a tale of before the Deluge*". He turns into a king who completes his duties as a king. He builds a storehouse and mighty wall to protect Uruk people from the great flood. He is a brave king which his comrades could trust.

3.3. Self-awareness of the Protagonist

To accomplish his high self-awareness, King Gilgamesh overtakes some stages. To develop his self-awareness, Gilgamesh the protagonist went through five stages, that is:

a. First stage: feeling clueless

The first stage is feeling clueless. In this stage, they feel cluelessness and incompetence. The aspect of this stage also has a close connection with the development of the frontal cortex. The frontal cortex is the part of the brain that will reach maturity at the age of 25. It makes the young people do not have the capability to plan complex

cognitive behavior, personality expression, decision making, and moderating social behavior. Under this circumstance, it will be difficult to develop self-awareness. In this stage, people feel clueless about who they are and they lack the important aspect who will help them to discover their constitution. In the beginning of the story, Gilgamesh is portrayed as a young tyrannical king. He has violence and reckless behavior and he does not listen to others. He saw himself above others.

In Uruk-the-Sheepfold he *walks [back and forth]*,
like a wild bull lording it, head held aloft.
He has no equal when his weapons are brandished,
his companions are kept on their feet by his *contests*.

(George, 1999: 64)

Gilgamesh's behavior can be explained with the theory of egocentricity from David Elkind. According to Elkind, young people or teenagers tend to accept the world (and him/herself) from their perspective (Desmita, 2005: 205). They are developing the concept where they think and see themselves from above. Later, Gilgamesh's type of egocentricity can be classified as *an imaginary audience*. Imaginary audience is when they believe that everyone only looks at them like they look at themselves. They think that they are important than others.

b. Second stage: understanding yourself

In this stage, people began to understand oneself that will result in understanding others. Some people will fall victim and unable to discover their awareness. People belong in these groups are categorized as person who unable to face 'shadow'. The concept of the shadow according to Carl Jung is the accumulation of all fears, desires, and impulses like sexual lust, power strivings, selfishness, greed, envy, anger or rage which operates on a subconscious level.

Before he met Enkidu, Gilgamesh is a king who falls victim to his own 'shadow'. He was unable to control his sexual lust which resulting him to rapes almost all women in his kingdom. For his selfishness and power strivings, he commits violence toward his men. Nevertheless, after Enkidu was created and stop him from his inappropriate action, he began to form the understanding and listen to others. He stops to rape women and harass his soldier. Even in his case, Enkidu is the only one who he able to understand and listen as friends.

'Why do you desire to do this thing?
... anything ... do you want so much?
Let me.....,
a feat that never was done in the land.'

They kissed each other and formed a friendship.
(George, 1999: 78)

c. Third stage: understanding social pattern

The third stage is to understand the social pattern. Social pattern is how society operates. There are three major areas in this aspect that needed to be aware. They are empathy, power dynamics, and influence or persuasion. In this stage, Gilgamesh is aware of empathy. According to Matsumoto (2009: 180), empathy is the process when someone experiencing other thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. Gilgamesh went this stage when Enkidu become ill.

as Gilgamesh listened to the words of Enkidu, his friend,
[all of a sudden his] tears were [flowing.]
Gilgamesh opened his mouth to speak, saying to Enkidu:
[‘My friend,] ..., [*do you, who*] had *understanding* and reason, [*now speak*] *profanity?* (George, 1999: 117)

The quotation above shows that Gilgamesh begins to experiencing empathy. When Enkidu is sick, Gilgamesh stays with him. He listens to his every word and crying when Enkidu begin to talk nonsense in his delirium state shown in words "*do you, who had understanding and reason, now speak profanity?*". For the first time, he feels sad because Enkidu's illness. Enkidu's illness causes him to experience and develop a new feeling and gives him the perception about death which he never really thought before.

d. Fourth stage: the fear of madness

The fear that if you going to madness is the next stage after understanding social patterns. After they aware that the reality is different from their understanding, everything is too much and difficult to handle. In this stage, people will feel hopeless and afraid that you will be going mad because your mind is attempting to steer your thoughts through the maze of madness and lost their mind.

[‘Six days] I wept for him [and seven nights:]
[I did not surrender his body for] burial
[until a maggot dropped from] his [nostril.]
[Then I was afraid that I too would die,]
[I grew] fearful of death, [and so wander the] wild.
(George, 1999: 160)

When Enkidu, Gilgamesh did not believe that he, Enkidu, has died and he mourns over him for seven nights. He does not allow Enkidu's body to be buried. Nevertheless, his belief was shattered after he saw maggot dropped from Enkidu's nostril. He feels hopeless and afraid. His despair and fear of death badly consume him and this condition makes him lose his mind. He absent-mindedly abandoned his kingdom to wandering to the end of the world to search the immortality. Gilgamesh is even getting paranoid almost

for every scary situation he faced as a potential cause for causing his death. He walks aimlessly to the far side of the world, and in the process, he is hard to himself and barely take care of his needs. He lost his temper so easily and acts rudely like he did toward Shiduri and Ur-shanabi.

His mind begins to work in a normal state when met Uta-napisthi who gives him advice and when he realized that besides his almost divine being is not so different from him. Because of Gilgamesh's statement, Uta-napisthi begins to tell him the story about the great flood which causing him to be an immortal being. He also asked Gilgamesh to always wake for seven nights without slumber to prove him that he was suitable to join in the gods' assembly which Gilgamesh failed to do it. Gilgamesh accepts that he failed the test. His extreme fear and desperation are decreasing and his mental resilience is going better, however, he also began to worry about what he was going to do next. Uta-napisthi sends him back to his kingdom with the help of Ur-shanabi.

e. Five stage: human nature accepted

The last stage of self-awareness is human nature accepted. In this stage, people are categorized into two groups: The first group is the one who stays with their despair and the second group is the one who accepts. The first group is the one who will search for reasons to complain and allow reality to destroy them. The second group is a group who able to accept reality and understand what they capable of and have a plan to control it. Human nature is tied with the world view. People do not have the capabilities to change the whole world, but they can change his or her world. The people in the first group is person who able to reach true self-awareness.

'[For whom,] Ur-shanabi, toiled my arms so hard,
for whom ran dry the blood of my heart?
Not for myself did I find a bounty,
[for] the "Lion of the Earth" I have done a favour!
'Now far and wide the tide is rising.
Having opened the channel I abandoned the tools:
what thing would I find that served as my landmark?
Had I only turned back, and left the boat on the shore!'
(George, 1999: 160)

After the long journey to find immortality, King Gilgamesh can reach self-awareness. He accepts the reality that he could not escape from death. Everything that he has done is in vain. Even he able to get the plant of youth, in the end, the plant was eaten by snake '*Lion of the Earth*' when he took a bath. He accepts his human nature and

changes his world view and begins to realize his value and responsibility as a ruler. He understands and decides to rule his kingdom seriously and wisdom.

Specifically, according to Eurich's four leadership archetypes, Gilgamesh in stage 1 until stage 4 is categorized as **Seekers**, people who have self-awareness with low external self-awareness. They do not know who they are and what they stand for. In this stage, Gilgamesh is in condition which he is not aware about who he is. He does not what he stands for. He is frustrated by his fear of death and abandons his kingdom, disregarding duties as a king. The stage five shows Gilgamesh in the **Aware** archetypes. The **aware** archetype is the condition when someone has a high internal self-awareness and high external self-awareness. They understand who they are and what they want to accomplish and value others' opinions. This is the stage where leaders begin to realize the true benefits of self-awareness. In this stage, Gilgamesh is aware of his human nature and who he is. He knows what he wants to accomplish and seek out, he carries out his duties as a king.

3.4. The Characterization of the Protagonist

Moral value is an important part of the novel which gives the reader new knowledge or lesson and it can be obtained after reading the novel. Moral value can get from story in novel and character in the novel (Kenney, 1966: 89). Based on the data, the researcher able to find and identified some morals values taken from the findings.

a. A good ruler is the one who carries out their duties for the sake of their subjects

In the sustainability of the nation, a good ruler is needed to regulate the people and the land. Ruler or leader must have the capabilities to rule their country. The good ruler is the one who understands and carries out their duties and they should protect and rule their subject in harmony, the one who has a high moral and does not destroy, harass, commit adultery, and exploit their people. Ruler is a figure which can be trusted by his/her subjects, the one who wise and hard-working

b. We must be careful when we make decisions to prevent the unwanted result

In everyday life, we always faced with the circumstances where we are required to make choices. When choosing and making a decision, we must be careful and considerate. This is expected so that we do not regret the outcome of our decision. When people make a decision, it means that they have responsibilities

for whatever they have been decided. Impulsive and reckless decision is normal for human behavior. Sometimes it is needed to protect us in a dangerous situation, but on the other hand, acting without thinking properly can destroy your life. Even a 'little' reckless decision could result in an untended consequence that makes someone regret in the end.

c. Self-aware people is someone who strong even they have weaknesses.

Human is perfect in their imperfection. Every human has weaknesses. Some people accept their weaknesses and others think that weaknesses are something they must get rid of them. They consider it as the troubles that obstruct their goals. Sometimes they compare themselves with others and feel that they are superior or inferior from others. People try very hard to eliminate or cover up their weaknesses and they are too captivated on it and forget their potential.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the characterization of King Gilgamesh as the protagonist that had been discussed, King Gilgamesh can be categorized as a round character since he undertakes changes in his characterization in the progress of the story. At the beginning of the story, he is portrayed as an arrogant and tyrant king who is an imprudent yet quite rational, dignified, and charming person. In the middle of the story, he became a coward, melancholy, and depressed king who desperate to search immortality. And at the end of his journey, he turned into a dutiful, wise, brave, and trusted king.

The protagonist's self-awareness can be categorized as *internal self-awareness* because it represents how he sees his values, views, emotion, manners, potencies, limitations, and the influence on others. How he aware of his values as king that must accomplish his duties in the end, how he begins to change his violence and tyrant behavior toward a good and wise king. To develop his self-awareness, Gilgamesh the protagonist went through 5 stages. The first stage is feeling clueless. The second stage is to understand yourself. The third stage is to understand social patterns, the fourth stage is afraid of turn into madness, and the last stage is to accept human nature.

There are three aspects of the story which can be learned in daily life. The first moral value is a good ruler is the one who carries out his/her duties for the sake of his/her subjects. The second moral value is we must be careful when we make decisions

to prevent the unwanted result. And the last moral value is self-aware people is someone who strong even they have weaknesses.

APPENDIX

This appendix contains the information of the characters on "The Epic of Gilgamesh".

King Gilgamesh	: the protagonist and king of Sumerian city-state Uruk.
Enkidu	: Gilgamesh's friend and equal, created by goddess Aruru
Aruru	: the goddess of creation who create Enkidu
Shamhat	: a sacred temple prostitute
Ninsun	: the goddess of wild cow, the mother of Gilgamesh, queen
Anu	: the sky-god, the highest deity in pantheon, Ishtar's father
Humbaba	: the guardian of the Cedar Forest
Ishtar	: the main goddess of the Eanna temple
Bull of Heaven	: divine beast that sent by Ishtar to attack Gilgamesh
Shamash	: God of the sun, justice, morality, and truth
Ur-shanabi	: the ferryman who help Gilgamesh across the Water of Death
Uta-napishti	: ancestor who survives the great flood and become deity

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